63.Simmons et al G-8 (1941-1951) 1964
M1 Middle East
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square mile; in the province of Hauran, 80 per square mile; and in the province of Hama, 77 per square mile. In contrast, the population density of Al Jazira, incorporating the potentially fertile plains of the Khabour river basin, was 18 per square mile. The country is about 70 per cent rural, with the inhabitants living in some 5,000 villages. There are 6 principal cities with populations of over 30,000 — Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia and Deir ez Zor. Damascus, the capital and a city of commercial and religious significance, had a population of almost 325,100 in 1949. Aleppo, an industrial and trade center, and the largest city in Syria, had a population of about 356,600. It disputes with Damascus the claim of being the oldest city of continued prominence in the world.

In addition to the older refugee communities, as the Armenians, the Assyrians and the Druzes, which have become established minority groups, Syria received an influx in 1948 of about 150,000 Arabs from northern Palestine. Approximately 80,000 located around Damascus; others in Hauran and the northern provinces. Their status and ultimate distribution were still undetermined in 1952, when the number on the roster of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees totaled 84,000. Over one third resided in special camps, but the remainder were living independently in the various towns and villages.

During the Ottoman regime, large numbers of Syrians emigrated to the Americas, and to Europe and Africa. Although they probably total almost 60,000, the Syrian colonies abroad are small in comparison with those of the Lebanese, and their influence on the cultural and the economic life of their homeland is proportionately slight.

The educational system has undergone revision since the founding of the republic in 1943, with increased emphasis on its adaptation to the culture and the needs of the people. Elementary education is compul-